NWT Plain Talk
On Land and Self-government
March 2002

Treaty Days - the Tradition Continues

Now that winter is over, DIAND's treaty party is traveling once again to each community to hold Treaty Day and pay each First Nation person five dollars. It isn't a large sum of money, and one might wonder why the practice continues.

This annual Treaty Day event stems from two historical treaties that were signed in the Northwest Territories between First Nations and the Crown. Treaty 8 was signed during the summers of 1899 and 1900; and Treaty 11 was signed in July, 1921.

Treaty 8 and Treaty 11 both made provisions for land, ammunition and twine for hunting and fishing, clothing allowances for chiefs and councillors, hunting and fishing rights, schooling, medical attention, and other benefits. One of the benefits was an annual cash payment of five dollars per member. Five dollars was worth considerably more than it is today.

For First Nations, these historical treaties are sacred. They impose mutual obligations and go to the heart of how the Parties wanted to live together. However, some treaty rights and benefits were not clearly defined or fulfilled. Today, First Nations and government continue to negotiate a contemporary understanding of these treaties.

There are still Elders in our communities who recall the first government treaty party visiting their area. When asked if Treaty Days should be discontinued, Elders have expressed a desire to see this annual event continue, as it brings people from communities and government together to honour and respect the significance of these historical treaties.

Annual treaty payments continue, not only to fulfill an obligation, but as a symbolic reminder of the special relationship that exists between Canada and First Nations.

Elders accept Treaty payment at Fort Rae, 1954. Photo: Gordon Harris/NWT Archives

Salt River First Nation Votes in Favour of Settlement

Salt River First Nation Chief Jim Schaefer

Chief Federal Negotiator Tim Christian

The day to day business of negotiations is not very glitzy or exciting, but there is something to be said for sticking to it. After more than nine years of negotiations, Salt River First Nation Chief, James Schaefer asked band members to vote on a proposed settlement agreement in December 2001.

Chief Schaefer was very pleased when the results came in, and he found out that the majority of Salt River members voted in favour of the Agreement.

Once the Agreement is finalized, it will provide a reserve land base for Salt River First Nation, and thus fulfil commitments made in Treaty 8. The proposed reserve land base includes about 166 square miles of land at 16 sites in and around the Town of Fort Smith, and four sites in Wood Buffalo National Park.

"On behalf of Canada, I, too, am very pleased with the results of the ratification vote," said Chief Federal Negotiator, Tim Christian. "We can now take the appropriate steps to advise our Minister and finalize this final settlement offer."

The Agreement will become final once it is signed by the Government of the Northwest Territories, and the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. A signing ceremony will likely take place in the next few months.

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The purpose of our newsletter is to keep you informed on the progress of land claim and self-government negotiations in the Northwest Territories, and to provide some answers to frequently asked questions. We also introduce newly appointed negotiators, celebrate milestones, and announce upcoming events. On behalf of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND), we hope you will find our claims newsletter informative and easy to read.

Treaty Days:
The Tradition Continues

Elder Bella Alexie, since deceased, talks to Treaty clerk Keren Wright, Robert Alexie, Sr., and Treaty clerk, Caroline Dennill listen at Fort McPherson, 1988.
Photo: Terry Jordan/DIAND

Tent city and church at Fort Resolution, 1924.
Photo: Canada, Dept. of the Interior/NWT Archives

Cece Hodgson-McCauley, former Chief of Inuvik, accepts flags from RCMP Gerry Kisoun on Treaty day in Inuvik, 1988.
Photo: Terry Jordan/DIAND

Treaty Day in Fort Liard in the 1970s.
Photo: Bob Wilson/NWT Archives

Chief Alexis Arrowmaker signs for Treaty. To his right is Treaty clerk Gerry Champagne. Joe Charlo and Randy Polto are to his left. Fort Rae, 1974.
Photo: Richard Finnie/NWT Archives

Waiting for the feast to begin at Treaty Day in Fort Rae, July 1974.
Photo: Richard Finnie/NWT Archives

At Treaty Day in Fort Resolution, 1924.
Photo: Canada, Dept. of the Interior/NWT Archives

Treaty Day stems from two historical treaties that were signed in the Northwest Territories between First Nations and the Crown. Treaty 8 was signed during the summers of 1899 and 1900; and Treaty 11 was signed in July, 1921.

Intergovernmental Forum leaders meet in Fort Simpson

Minister Robert Nault and Premier Stephen Kakfwi met with NWT Aboriginal leaders in Fort Simpson for the third Intergovernmental Forum (IGF) in January. The IGF was established two years ago, and is an important means of bringing northern leaders together to share information and make joint decisions on territorial issues.

Through the IGF, northern leaders have agreed to work on three priorities: devolution and resource revenue-sharing, economic development, and capacity building.

At this last meeting in Fort Simpson, leaders agreed:

- to announce the recent appointments of 18 members to the new NWT Economic Development Advisory Forum;
- to continue to develop a formal process to negotiate the devolution of federal responsibilities over land and resources in the NWT, including resource revenue-sharing;
- to review and consider the Aboriginal Summit's paper, "A New Approach to Aboriginal Government Capacity Building", which may provide direction on how to proceed on specific, capacity building initiatives in the future.

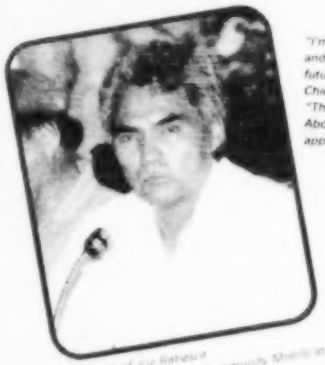
The next IGF is scheduled to take place in April.

A Joint Approach to Economic Development

A newly formed economic development group met for the first time in Fort Simpson in early March.

What is this new economic development group?

At the last IGF meeting, Aboriginal, territorial and federal leaders agreed to set up an NWT Economic Development Advisory Forum. This new forum is an independent group of 18 members, each jointly appointed by the three IGF parties. Together, they represent a cross-section of economic development interests in the NWT, including renewable resources, non-renewable resources, traditional economy, transportation and infrastructure, financing, human resource development, social development, tourism, environment and the service sector.



Grand Chief Joe Rabesca
Photo courtesy of NWT Community Mobilization Partnership - Photo by Tessa MacIntosh

"I'm pleased to be a member of this new Advisory Forum, and I look forward to being involved in jointly planning the future economic development of our territory," said Grand Chief Joe Rabesca, on behalf of the Aboriginal Summit. "The Advisory Forum provides an opportunity for Aboriginal Governments to participate in the design of new approaches to sustainable development."

"This partnership is an indication of our collective commitment to better coordinate and streamline our approach to economic development in the NWT" said Jim Antoine, GNWT's Minister Responsible for the Intergovernmental Forum and Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development. "Establishing this Advisory Forum within the broad framework of the Intergovernmental Forum ensures that all parties' interests will be well represented."

Minister Jim Antoine
Photo courtesy of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development

What is expected of this new economic development advisory forum?

IGF officials expect this new advisory forum to make recommendations on how to reduce barriers to economic development. They will also provide advice on how to take a more coordinated and focused approach towards economic development in the NWT. These recommendations will help government use current programming more efficiently and effectively, and will help set future priorities and initiatives in the NWT.

Minister Robert Nault
Photo: DIAND

"We are creating a new partnership that will focus its energy on bringing about more coordinated economic development programming in the NWT," said Robert Nault, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. "Governments, working together, need to develop our economic development priorities, policies, and initiatives."

"This collaborative advisory approach considers a full range of views, and increases Aboriginal involvement in economic policy development in a practical way," said Ethel Blondin-Andrew, MP for the Western Arctic. "By addressing these issues collectively, this territory will be better positioned to take advantage of future opportunities."

MP Ethel Blondin-Andrew
Photo: Caroline Dennis/DIAND

Road Maintenance Project creates Twenty-two Jobs

A newly incorporated Aboriginal-owned company, Kete Whii Limited, recently received $474 445 for an economic development project. The company bought trucks and equipment and has now set up a road maintenance shop at the BHP Misery Lake Mine.

Kete Whii Limited, co-owned by Dogrib Trustco, Deton'Cho Corporation and Densoline Corporation, has obtained two nine-year contracts from BHP Billiton Diamonds Inc. to maintain the road and haul ore from the Misery satellite pit to the Ekati processing plant. The contracts have an estimated value of $45 million.

This project, funded by DIAND's Resource Acquisition Initiative, created 22 jobs, including two management positions, two trades positions, six heavy equipment operators and 14 drivers.

These jobs are going to members of the communities of Rae-Edzo, Wha Ti, Gameti, Wekweti, Dettah, N'dilo and Lutsel K'e. Training is a important part of this project, to help community members develop skills that they will then be able to use in future jobs.

Q. Why does Canada continue to make Treaty payments of five dollars to each First Nation person in the NWT? It seems like a lot of trouble for so little money?

A. Canada pays a treaty annuity each year to First Nation members in the NWT to fulfill obligations contained in both Treaty 8 and Treaty 11. This annual event respects and acknowledges these treaties and the special relationship that exists between First Nations people and the Government of Canada.

Do you have a question about land or self-government negotiations in the NWT? We'd be happy to provide an answer. Contact us at the address listed below

On the web

Visit the following for more information:

Government of Canada programs and services:
Government of Canada home page:
www.gc.ca

Plain Talk on the web:
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada site:
www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/nt/pt/index_e.html

Various claims agreements:
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada site:
www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/agr/index_e.html

OUR Vision

The NWT region of DIAND is a respected partner in a strong and healthy Northwest Territories. We strive for:

- respectful, effective relationships with Aboriginal peoples;
- creating and enhancing opportunities for all northerners;
- responsible resource development in healthy ecosystems;
- northern control over northern resources;
- responsive and accountable northern governments as partners; and
- national initiatives that reflect the interests of all Northerners.

Plain Talk is produced to provide general information on topics related to land claims and self-government. It is not a legal document.

We welcome your input!
Please Direct questions or comments to:

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Plain Talk on Land and Self-government is produced by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in the NWT to help northerners understand these concepts, how they work, and what they mean in our day-to-day lives.